
**ENERGY PROGRAMS
CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM**

EP – 400 CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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400.01 GENERAL INFORMATION

The Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) serves individuals and families who are experiencing a heating or cooling related crisis. A household is in a crisis if it is currently experiencing or is in danger of experiencing a life-threatening or health-related emergency and sufficient, timely, and appropriate assistance is not available from any other source. Life-threatening is defined as a household which has no heating or cooling source or has a disconnect notice for their primary heating or cooling service and the health or well-being of a household member would be in danger if the heating or cooling crisis was not alleviated. Each household should be evaluated on a case by case basis to determine if there is a heating or cooling crisis.

The following sections of the Energy Programs manual also apply to CIP:

	Section	Section Number
1	Contracting and Vendor Agreement	120
2	Retention	125
3	Appeals and Hearing Process	135
4	Overpayments and Fraud	140
5	Household Composition	150
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400.02 FUNDING

At the beginning of each State fiscal year (July through June), each county receives an allocation to fund CIP. As this is a block grant program, funding is limited. The CIP automated system tracks funding to ensure that funds are not overspent.

400.03 APPLICATION REQUIREMENT

Everyone who wishes to apply must be given the opportunity to do so on the same day they visit or contact the agency. Each applicant must be screened promptly to determine whether the household is in an energy-related crisis situation. Only households identified as being in an energy-related crisis are potentially eligible for CIP.

Application taking must begin in July when new funding is allocated and continue until the CIP allocation is exhausted or until the end of the state fiscal year, whichever comes first. The applicant must be allowed to sign an application on the day he/she appears at the county department of social services or other agency responsible for taking applications. Scheduling appointments for CIP applications is not appropriate due to the federal requirement to alleviate a crisis within 18 to 48 hours of application.

NOTE: If an interview cannot be completed on the same day an application is signed, an interview appointment may be scheduled if the crisis is screened as non-life threatening and the 48 hour processing time will be met.

A valid social security number is required, when available, for each household member. Applicants not currently active in Food and Nutrition Services, WFFA, or Medicaid must sign the DMA-5001, Notice of the Use of Social Security Numbers, when Income and Eligibility Verifications System (IEVS) matches are performed prior to the applicant's signing of the DSS-8178, Energy Programs Application.

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Households with a Native American adult age 18 and older residing in Cumberland, Hoke, Robeson, and Scotland counties, who wish to apply for CIP benefits, must do so through the Lumbee Tribe.

NOTE: CIP applicants must be provided with the opportunity for voter registration.

A. Acceptance of Application

1. The applicant or his representative must apply for CIP in the county in which the household resides. The applicant must be a resident of North Carolina. If an applicant comes in to apply and states they are moving to another county but has to have the utilities turned on before they are able to physically move, the current county should verify the new address via a lease or statement from the landlord and take and process the applicants application.

NOTE: If the county in which the applicant resides does not have a vendor agreement with the applicant's utility vendor in the county where the applicant is moving, the new county will be responsible for taking and processing the application.

2. When you receive a request for assistance by mail or telephone and a crisis is indicated, follow-up within one workday to schedule an interview. If the request is made by an individual who would have difficulty coming to a county department of social services or outpost office, obtain the information for the application by telephone. Situations in which an applicant or household member is unable to come into the agency are defined as, but not limited to:
 - a. The household lives in a rural location and does not have transportation; or
 - b. The applicant or household member is disabled or incapacitated, has an illness, caring for a household member, prolonged severe weather, or employment hours or training schedule which conflicts with the agency hours.

If a life-threatening situation exists, a home visit to obtain the needed information may be necessary if the information can not be obtained by some other means.

Application Procedure for Telephone Interviews

- a. Complete the application interview over the telephone.
- b. Mail the application form DSS-8178. Do not key an application in the CIP system until the signed DSS-8178 is returned. The county is responsible for keeping a record of applications being mailed.
- c. The date of application is the date the signed application is received in the agency.
- d. Authorize benefits within 18 to 48 hours of receiving a signed application.

An application is not considered complete unless it has been signed. Applications mailed after the conclusion of a telephone interview must be signed by the applicant or authorized representative. Applications not returned or returned not signed are not complete applications. Notify the applicant, verbally or in writing, that his application is incomplete and will not be processed. Document your verbal contact or file a copy of the letter in the case record. Do not key an unsigned application into the energy system.

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3. If the applicant or his representative decides not to apply, complete the inquiry. Include as much information about the situation as possible.
4. Conduct a thorough search of the CIP online system to determine if anyone in the household has received CIP before.

B. Who must be included in the application?

Everyone who lives at the same residence must be included in the CIP household unless the residence is known to be a boarding house or has a separate apartment. If the residence is a known boarding house or separate apartment with a heat source, there must be a written agreement or lease.

Households have the option to include or exclude foster children in the household. If the child is included, count income of the child and foster care payment. If the child is not included, exclude all income of the child including the foster care payment.

At least one responsible adult payee must be in the household. An adult payee is defined as the person responsible for the household. An adult payee must be listed as head of the household or case. Household benefits are subject to the maximum benefit amount per household as listed in 400.04. Benefit amounts are tied to the adult payee of the case at the time of application. If there are other adult family members in the household, create a "New" household.

EXAMPLE: A husband and wife are in the home and are applying for CIP for their daughter and son. The husband is the adult payee of the CIP case. The case is approved for this household in the amount of \$200. The wife moves out of home and lives with her mother. The wife goes in to apply for CIP. The wife can be the adult payee of the case and receive the full amount available under CIP.

If the original adult payee who has already been approved for a CIP application applies again during the State fiscal year for assistance under CIP, this household's benefit amount will be tracked according to the approval amount already received.

EXAMPLE: The husband and wife are in the home and are applying for CIP for their daughter and son. The husband is the adult payee of the CIP case. The case is approved for this household in the amount of \$200; the maximum allowed benefit amount established by the state during the State fiscal year is \$600. The husband moves out of the home, establishes a new residence, and applies for CIP. The household is eligible for an additional \$400 during the State fiscal year.

C. Changes during the Application Process

1. If the adult payee of the case changes (moves, dies, etc.) before the application is processed, evaluate the current crisis and household situation. Determine whether there is an adult member in the household included in the original application who can serve as payee. If so, follow these steps:
 - a. Close the original application and key a revised CIP Application reflecting the new payee's name.
 - b. Update all information for the adult payee.
 - c. Process the "new" CIP Application.
2. If the adult payee of the case changes (moves, dies, etc.) before the application is processed and there is no adult member in the household who can serve as payee for the case, follow these steps:

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- a. Deny the CIP case due to no eligible adult payee in household.
- b. Inform the household members by printing a denial notice from the automated system.
- c. Document information in the Energy system.

D. Explanation of Rights and Responsibilities

- 1. Explain to the applicant he has the right to:
 - a. Receive assistance if found eligible.
 - b. Have any person participate in the interview for determination of eligibility.
 - c. Be protected against discrimination on the grounds of race, creed, or national origin by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. He may appeal such discrimination through Section 504 of the Disability Act.
 - d. Have any information given to the agency kept in confidence.
 - e. Appeal if:
 - (1) He was denied the right to apply for assistance;
 - (2) His application was denied;
 - (3) His assistance was incorrect based on the county's interpretation of State regulations; **or**
 - (4) A decision is not made on his application within 48 hours.
 - f. Apply at anytime.
 - g. Withdraw from the assistance program at anytime.
- 2. Explain to the applicant he has the responsibility to:
 - a. Provide the county department of social services necessary information which can be used to locate and obtain information to determine eligibility; **and**
 - b. Report immediately to the county department of social services the receipt of benefits which he knows to be erroneous. If he does not report such incorrect payments, he may be required to repay any overpayment.
 - c. Provide verification of his social security number. If he does not have verification, accept his statement. Do not delay processing the application if the applicant cannot provide verification of his social security number through documentation or verbal statement.
- 3. Explain the meaning of fraud to the applicant. (For County Responsible Overpayments, see DSS-8201).

E. Completion of the Online Application During the Interview

- 1. Document the applicant's response to the questions on the online application in the CIP automated system. See EP-600, Crisis Intervention Program System Instructions.

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2. As part of the interview process, determine what other services may be appropriate to meet the crisis. Document in the Comments section of the online application which services were provided.
3. The applicant must sign the Signature Page generated by the CIP automated system.

F. Eligibility Determination

When you complete the interview, verify all necessary factors of eligibility to determine if the household is eligible.

The household must meet the following eligibility criteria in order to be eligible for CIP.

1. Income – Check the EIS and/or FSIS system to validate the household's statements to the extent possible. If EIS and/or FSIS is unavailable, accept the client's statement, unless questionable. If questionable, use other acceptable forms of verification.

The household meets income eligibility if the total household's members' countable income is equal to or less than 150% of the current poverty level. See the chart below. Use Section EP-300.09 to determine countable and excluded income and income deductions.

No. Eligible In Household	Maximum Countable Income	No. Eligible In Household	Maximum Countable Income
1	\$1,471	14	\$8,231
2	1,991	15	8,751
3	2,511	16	9,271
4	3,031	17	9,791
5	3,551	18	10,311
6	4,071	19	10,831
7	4,591	20	11,351
8	5,111		
9	5,631		
10	6,151		
11	6,671		
12	7,191		
13	7,711		

If there are more than 20 in a household, call the Economic and Family Services Section at 919-527-6300 for the maximum gross monthly income.

To determine income eligibility, use actual (gross income) and anticipated income, both ongoing and terminated in the month received, for the application. Do not convert.

2. Citizenship

A household must contain a U.S. citizen or an eligible alien. See Section 175 for more details.

3. A crisis situation must exist.

See G. below.

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Document eligibility verification on CIP automated online application. Receipt of CIP benefits does not affect a household's eligibility for LIEAP, Energy Neighbor, Emergency Assistance, etc.

G. Crisis Determination

A household is in a crisis if it is currently experiencing or is in danger of experiencing a life-threatening or health-related emergency and sufficient, timely, and appropriate assistance is not available from any other source. Life-threatening is defined as a household which has no heating or cooling source or has a disconnect notice for their primary heating or cooling service and the health or well-being of a household member would be in danger if the heating or cooling crisis was not alleviated. Each household should be evaluated on a case by case basis to determine if there is a heating or cooling crisis. Once a crisis is determined, check to see if funds are available through another energy assistance resource such as Energy Neighbor or Share the Warmth to alleviate the crisis prior to using CIP.

If the applicant has a history of being in a crisis situation, explore all other resources to assist in alleviating the situation. Counsel with the applicant and consider developing a plan with the household to ensure that it takes necessary steps to avoid future crisis situations. This may include working with the energy supplier to pay a level amount year-round (equal payment plan), establishing a payment plan for outstanding balances at the end of the heating season to avoid disconnection, or planning ahead to budget for expenses that occur periodically such as the purchase of school clothes and anticipated breaks in seasonal employment that result in reduced income.

H. Verification and Documentation

Verify eligibility for assistance and that a crisis exists.

1. Viewing the energy bill or contacting the energy supplier.
2. Validating to the extent possible, the household's statement through review of EIS and/or FSIS data if current.
3. Confirming, to the extent possible, the presence of a disabled member using verification from sources such as BENDEX, SDX, or VA documentation, or by a doctor's note.
4. Contacting collaterals, such as neighbors, vendors, landlords, etc.
5. Viewing the cut-off notice.

Document the applicant's statements and verification sources used in the Comments section of the CIP online application. When you use other evidence, document the type used and the date. If a collateral is contacted, show the collateral's name, date, and statement.

I. Time Frames for Authorizing Assistance to Eligible Households

1. Time Frame For Authorizing Assistance For Households With a Disconnect Notice.

Authorize benefits to avoid disconnection; however, all applications must be processed within 48 hours (2 calendar days) of application. This includes households with a future disconnect date. This does not mean issuance of benefits, but you must authorize eligibility to alleviate the crisis. These deadlines apply even if another agency is taking the application.

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2. Time Frame For Authorizing Assistance For Households Without A Heating or Cooling Source.

Authorize benefits within 18 hours of application. This does not mean issuance of benefits, but you must authorize eligibility to alleviate the crisis. These deadlines apply even if another agency is taking the application.

NOTE: When a Crisis application is taken and the time frame for authorization falls on a weekend or holiday, extend the time frame for authorization to the close of business the next workday.

J. Notification of Eligibility

Generate the DSS-8107 Approval/Denial Notice from the Energy online system. See EP-600, Crisis Intervention Program System Instructions.

400.04 BENEFIT LEVELS AND METHODS OF PAYMENTS

A. Benefit Levels

1. If eligible and funds are available, a household may receive benefits more than one time during a State fiscal year, which is defined as July through June.
2. The maximum allowed benefit amount per State fiscal year is \$600. The maximum allowed benefit amount can be up to \$600 per application, per crisis situation.
3. Benefits may vary based upon the amount needed to alleviate the crisis; however, benefits cannot exceed \$600 and/or the maximum allowed benefit amount per State fiscal year.
4. If more than the maximum allowed benefit amount is needed to alleviate the crisis, you must:
 - Determine if the household has funds available and/or there are other community resources that can be used in conjunction with CIP; **or**
 - Negotiate with the vendor to alleviate the crisis for the maximum CIP payment allowed; **or**
 - Counsel the applicant on any available options which can be used. Use this option only if you are unable to alleviate the crisis using 1. or 2. above.
 - If you are unable to alleviate the crisis by one of the means listed above, deny the crisis application.
5. If less than the maximum allowed benefit amount is needed to alleviate the crisis, authorize the lesser amount. Authorize only the amount needed to alleviate the crisis situation up to the maximum allowed benefit amount.

B. Method of Payment

Methods of payment include but are not limited to:

1. Fuel payments to the vendor;
2. Voucher payments;
3. Direct Vendor payments;

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4. Two-party check

If a household is set up on a payment agreement with their vendor, the county will need to verify the terms of the agreement, when the household will face disconnection, and how much is needed to prevent disconnection. Regular agreement payments should not be made by the county.

For electricity vendors who use prepaid metering, the county will need to contact the vendor and verify how much electricity the household has before their balance reaches zero (electricity will automatically shut off when the balance reaches zero). If the household has less than four days of electricity, the county can authorize a CIP payment for thirty days of electricity, not to exceed \$250.

C. Use of Funds

Each county must use CIP funds to alleviate heating and cooling crisis situations, based on client need for the following:

1. Utility deposits to a heating or cooling supplier;

NOTE: Deposits have to be tied to a crisis and the utility service has to be in the name of an adult household member.

2. Heating bills where the heating source may include gas, fuel oil, kerosene, wood, coal, etc.;

3. Bulk or single purchases of air conditioners, heating units, and the like;

NOTE: Items purchased in bulk cannot be accounted for in the CIP system until linked with an actual client. Air conditioners should only be purchased if the household does not have a cooling source or the source is broken. Special attention should be given to households containing persons over age 60 and children 5 and under.

4. Temporary shelter which includes, but is not limited to, rent payments or hotel/motel expenses that serve to alleviate a heating or cooling crisis.

5. Utility Payments (for all heating or cooling sources) expense, which include, but are not limited to:

- Past due bills with a disconnect notice, or
- Connection or reconnection fees.

6. Home Repairs which include, but are not limited to:

- Heating or cooling appliance replacement or repair;
- Insulation replacement;
- Necessary wiring/circuit board replacements to be able to heat or cool home;
- Replacement/repair of windows, roofs, walls; **or**
- Any repair/replacement completed that would allow households the ability to heat or cool their homes.

7. In-kind services such as blankets, space heaters, and warm clothing. Space heaters should only be purchased if the household does not have a heating source or the source is broken.

400.05 RECORDS AND REPORTS

A. Case Records

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In addition to the CIP online application, a case record must be set up on each household that applies. The record must contain the Signature Page, a copy of the DSS-8107 Approval/Denial Notice, and any other documents used to determine eligibility. This information may be filed in the Work First, Food and Nutrition Services, Medicaid, or LIEAP case record. Assign all other cases a unique county case number.

See the Records Retention Schedule for requirements on retention of the case file. See EP-125.

B. Reports

See EP-600 for a description of the reports produced by the CIP automated system.

400.06 OTHER SERVICES

See Energy Manual Section EP-200, Energy Programs Outreach Plan, for LifeLine Services.